

Gaines Congregational United Church of Christ

May 22, 2022

First Reading; Acts 16: 9-15

Responsive Reading; Psalm 67

Epistle Reading; Revelation 21: 10-22:5

Gospel Reading; John 14: 23-29

Sermon Title:

## **A NEW HOME, A NEW JOB, AND A NEW LIFE**

By Rev. Jim Gardner

Summary; Grow with Jesus. If you are not uncomfortable, you are not growing forward.

The first thing that jumps out at us from the scriptures today is probably the reading from Revelation. Many of us avoid the book of Revelation. If we see it as prophecy it seems too hard to follow and quite scary. If we see it as an apostolic vision of one man, we might opt to dismiss it altogether.

I believe this would be a mistake. People who have had a close relationship with God will try to express that connection in a way that will show the unimaginable wonder of God. I do believe that the author of this book, maybe John, has definitely

had an enlightening experience. John envisions a city that is by our measurements, fourteen hundred to fifteen hundred miles long by fourteen to fifteen hundred miles wide and by fourteen to fifteen hundred miles high and that is just the city proper.

This does not start to take into consideration the land it sits on.

If this were not unbelievable enough, this city is totally built of precious metals and gemstones that we have only seen in jewelry or decorative plaques. If you can't wrap your head around anything this jaw dropping don't feel bad. You are not alone.

Matthew, Mark and Luke all try to prepare us to believe what seems impossible when it comes to God. They basically each say, "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

If all things are possible then why not a city big enough to hold the whole world where all nations are at peace with each other and this city, and country side around it, has perfect weather and is illuminated by the light of God and Jesus?

If this seems all too unbelievable then it might help to realize that this, to a lesser extent, has been predicted over a thousand years earlier in our Psalm reading where it says that all nations would praise God and be judged in righteousness by God. We say, "One nation under God." But the psalm predicts, "All nations under God."

If we are going to have any chance of believing what seems impossible maybe we need to start smaller. We need to look at how God has worked throughout history. Paul had a vision and it started the spread of Christianity into Greece and Europe and brought a well connected business woman and her family into the Christian fold. Purple was an expensive commodity sold to the most influential and wealthy members of that society. Lydia opened doors that might very well have been inaccessible to a traveling preacher. Who da thunk it?

In our Gospel Lesson Jesus says that if we love Him and keep His word, He and the Father will come to us and make our home with Him.

We can have Jesus and the Father living with us right here and right now. Jesus was willing to live, and die and be resurrected in Galilee and Jesus is ready and willing to live in our hearts and in our community. Jesus will hold us in His arms and help us through any troubles that we may face. Jesus is all around us but through eyes of faith we need to see Him. Jesus once told the Pharisees that if they could not believe earthly things how could they ever believe heavenly things.

If we want to see God in all His glory, we first need to see Him in our own back yard. Several years ago, George Straight sang a song called "I Saw God Today". I can't sing it so let me read it.

*“Just walked down the street to the coffee shop. Had to take a break. I’ve been by her side for 18 hours straight.*

*Saw a flower growing in the middle of the sidewalk. Pushing up through the concrete. Like it was planted right there for me to see.*

*The flashing lights, The honking horns. All seem to fade away. In shadow of the hospital. At 5:08. I saw God today.*

*I’ve been to church. I’ve read the book. I know He’s here. But I don’t look. Near as often as I should. Yeah, I know I should. His fingerprints are everywhere. I just look down to stop and stare. Open my eyes and then I swear. I saw God today.*

*Saw a couple walking by. They were holding hands. And she had that glow. Yeah, I couldn’t help but notice she was starting to show. Stood there for a minute. Taking in the sky. Lost in that sunset. A splash of amber melting into shades of red.*

*I’ve been to church. I’ve read the book. I know He’s here. But I don’t look. Near as often as I should. Yeah, I know I should.*

*His fingerprints are everywhere. I just look down and stop and stare. Open my eyes and then I swear. I saw God today.”*

We can all see God every day. He's in the flowers. He's in the sunset. He is in a baby's laugh. If we will but see Him around us, we can feel His healing power fill our bodies and souls.

Usually God makes His presence known in small things but every now and then, just when we need it most, He knocks our socks off.

It happened to me in April 2017. My wife was having a problem where her hip would dislocate and she would have to go to Buffalo General to have it manipulated back into place. The 23<sup>rd</sup> time this happened was at about 4am when she tried to get out of bed to go to the bathroom. The ambulance took off with her and I followed shortly after. I was distraught. I asked God to help me through it. I told God I would never abandon Him but I really needed a sign that He felt my pain. As I came under an overpass, I saw several trees on the right side of the road with the most beautiful Christmas lights that I had ever seen. This was in April. I thanked God and then when I drew closer, I realized that there was not a single light on those trees. There was a light covering of ice on the leafless branches and someone had left the light on the front of a mausoleum that was hidden by a house. That light reflected back through those ice-covered branches. I cried so hard I had to pull over. God had answered my prayer spectacularly. You have a new home with Jesus. Like Lydia You have a new job, be a seller of the word.

And God gives you a new life as His son or daughter and the brother or sister of His son Jesus. Hey, why not streets of gold or maybe for us country bumpkins, fields of green with brooks and flowers. All things are possible with God and we are assured of a new home, a new job, and a new life.

Hallelujah and amen!